

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 196245

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 17091 ACTION SECSTATE 18 AUG

QUOTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 17091

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS CINCPAC AND SECDEF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, TH

SUBJECT: US FORCES IN THAILAND

1. IN THE COURSE OF A TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI TODAY ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS, HE RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE US PAYING THE COST OF MAINTAINING BASES AFTER THE US DRAWDOWN. HE SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THEY SHOULD BE KEPT IN A CONDITION WHICH WOULD PERMIT THEIR BEING USED IN SOME FUTURE EVENTUALITY. I REPLIED THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OFT-REPEATED POLICY OF THE RTG WE WERE CLOSING BASES AND TURNING THEM OVER TO THE THAI GOVERNMENT. CHATCHAI THEN COMMENTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT ONLY WANTED QUOTE COMBAT FORCES UNQUOTE TO LEAVE, OTHER UNITS AND ACTIVITIES COULD STAY PROVIDED THEY WERE UNDER JUSMAG. I SAID THAT I WAS MOST INTERESTED TO

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RECEIVE THIS RE-STATEMENT OF THAI POLICY AS I HAD BEEN HOPING FOR

CLARIFICATION OF THIS IMPORTANT QUESTION AND HAD INSTRUCTIONS TO DISCUSS OUR LONG-TERM SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH THAILAND WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. (ON THE BASIS OF PAST EXPERIENCE I AM SURE CHATCHAI WOULD BE PRESENT AT THIS MEETING AND IT WAS BEST TO TIP HIM OFF.)

2. I ASKED CHATCHAI WHETHER THIS INTERPRETATION OF THAI POLICY APPLIED ALSO TO OTHER US INSTALLATIONS BESIDES AIR BASES AND HE REPLIED AIRILY THAT IT DID PROVIDED THEY WERE UNDER JUSMAG.

3. I ASKED CHATCHAI WHETHER HE WAS ENVISAGING A US PRESENCE AT ONE OR MORE BASES AND HE ANSWERED THAT ARRANGEMENTS OF THIS KIND COULD BE WORKED OUT AS SEEMED BEST FOR THE RTAF AND THE USAF. IF THE USAF WANTED TO KEEP SOME UTILITY PLANES HERE THAT WOULD BE FINE. THAILAND SIMPLY WANTED TO BE IN A POSITION TO AFFIRM THAT IT HAD NO US COMBAT FORCES ON ITS SOIL.

4. CHATCHAI ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE BY MARCH TO CLOSE OUT MACTHAI AND HAVE ONLY JUSMAG. I SAID THIS WOULD BE NO PROBLEM. CHATCHAI SAID THAT MACTHAI WAS A COMBAT COMMAND AND THAT ITS REMAINING IN THAILAND WOULD GIVE THE WRONG IMPRESSION. I SAID THAT I WAS SURE THE CHANGE IN DESIGNATION COULD BE ARRANGED AT A MUTUALLY AGREED TIME.

5. CHATCHAI HAD EARLIER GIVEN ME A LIST OF AIRCRAFT WHICH HE SAID THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WISHED TO HAVE LEAVE THAILAND AT ONCE. I REMINDED HIM THAT SOME OF THESE WERE UTILITY PLANES. CHATCHAI'S ANSWER WAS THAT OTHERS WERE COMBAT PLANES AND IN ANY CASE THE LIST CAME FROM DEFENSE AND I COULD GO OVER IT WITH MOD.

6. UPON MY RETURN TO THE OFFICE, KOSON, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, TELEPHONED TO SAY THAT HE WANTED TO CORRECT A MISUNDERSTANDING. THE LIST OF PLANES THE MINISTER HAD GIVEN ME WERE NOT PLANES THE THAI WISHED TO HAVE LEAVE. ON THE CONTRARY THEY WERE PLANES THE RTG WISHED THE US TO LEAVE IN THAILAND AND GIVE TO THE RTAF. THE LIST FOLLOWS.

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I SAID AS I HAD EARLIER THAT I WAS NOT A BIT SURE THAT THESE PLANES WERE HERE AND THAT THIS WAS QUITE A PACKAGE. KOSON SAID HE HOPED I WOULD DISCUSS THIS WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE.

7. AS WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL CHATCHAI HAD EARLIER ALLUDED TO HIS PLAN TO EXPEL LAO RIGHTIST LEADERS FROM THAILAND IN ORDER TO PLACATE THE PATHET LAO AND HANOI. THEN AFTER MAKING THE FOREGOING STATEMENTS WITH REGARD TO BASES AND THE US PRESENCE HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WAS DIFFERENT FOR THE AMERICANS THAN IT WAS FOR THE THAI. WE HAD HOMES FAR AWAY. THEY LIVED HERE. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN HE ASKED RHETORICALLY IF THAILAND WAS INVADED.? THAILAND'S SITUATION WAS A DIFFICULT ONE, HE SAID GLUMLY. IT WOULD BE VERY TIMELY FOR ME TO MEET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE SUBJECT OF OUR LONG TERM RELATIONS.

8. COMMENT: SINCE DRAFTING THE FOREGOING I HAVE BEEN OVER IT WITH GENERAL ADERHOLT WHO CONFIRMS THAT THERE ARE NO F5ES IN THAILAND AND THAT THE RTAF KNOWS VERY WELL THAT IT IS NOT GOING TO BE GIVEN THE OV10S. THERE ARE VARIOUS OTHER ERRORS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN THE LIST ON WHICH MACTHAI WILL COMMENT SEPTEL. ALTHOUGH AS USUAL THE THAI ARE FISHING FOR AIRCRAFT THEY KNOW THEY WILL NOT GET, IN OUR VIEW THEY WILL BE SATISFIED WITH THE PACKAGE WHICH HAS BEEN REQUESTED AND IS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON.

9. IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE LATEST CRISIS WITH THE LAO AND THE FULMINATIONS OF HANOI ARE BRINGING THE THAI AROUND TO A MORE SOBER VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP THEY WANT WITH THE US.

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